

Message Text

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ACTION OES-07

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 EA-10 SP-02 CIAE-00 INR-07

NSAE-00 NSF-01 NAS-01 PA-01 PRS-01 USIA-06 /049 W

-----005038 240218Z /41

R 231837Z DEC 77

FM AMEMBASSY PARIS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3552

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: TPHY, FR, CA, US

SUBJECT: FRANCO-CANADIAN HAWAII TELESCOPE PROJECT

1. BEGIN SUMMARY: THE 5-YEAR OLD FRANCO-CANADIAN PROJECT TO MOUNT A 3.6 METER TELESCOPE ON MAUNA KEA IN HAWAII IS NEARLY ON SCHEDULE, WITH SOME DELAYS IN BOTH CONSTRUCTION AND MOUNTING OF THE INSTRUMENT AND ESTABLISHING THE NECESSARY INFRASTRUCTURE FOR ITS PERSONNEL. THE CURRENT PROGNOSIS IS THAT THE TELESCOPE WILL START OPERATING ABOUT A YEAR LATE, IN LATE 1979 OR EARLY IN 1980. END SUMMARY.

2. THE CONSTRUCTION OF A 3.6 METER FRANCO-CANADIAN OPTICAL TELESCOPE NEAR THE SUMMIT OF MOUNT MAUNA KEA ON HAWAII ISLAND HAS BEEN UNDER DISCUSSION FOR MORE THAN FIVE YEARS. PROJECT IS DIRECTED BY THE CANADA FRANCE HAWAII TELESCOPE CORPORATION (CFH), AN ENTITY WHOSE 10-MAN BOARD OF DIRECTORS IS COMPOSED OF FOUR FRENCHMEN, FOUR CANADIANS AND TWO HAWAIIANS. THE PRESIDENCY OF THE CORPORATION ROTATES BETWEEN CANADA AND FRANCE. THE PRESENT PRESIDENT, MR. DELHAYE, IS TO BE REPLACED IN 1978 BY THE CANADIAN VICE PRESIDENT, MR. MACRAE.

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3. THIS BODY FINISHED A MEETING IN PARIS ON DECEMBER 16, 1977, WHERE A CONSENSUS WAS REACHED THAT THE MAJOR PROBLEMS HAVE NOW BEEN DEALT WITH. THE SITE OF THE TELESCOPE HAS BEEN FIXED AS HAS THAT OF THE BUILDINGS WHERE THE PERSONNEL WILL LIVE. THE LACK OF OPTIMUM OBSERVATION SITES IN FRANCE HAD LED THE GOF TO SEEK INTERNATIONAL PARTNERS. AFTER SEEKING

COLLABORATION WITH THE US, UK, GERMANY, AND ITALY, AND FINDING EACH OTHERWISE OCCUPIED IN ASTRONOMICAL PURSUITS, FRANCE BEGAN ITS COOPERATION WITH CANADA. THESE LATTER TWO COUNTRIES SHARE THE COST OF THE CONSTRUCTION OF THIS TELESCOPE, WHILE THE UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII IS TO CONTRIBUTE THE GENERAL INFRASTRUCTURE.

4. THE NEXT DECISION FACING THE CORPORATION IS THE SELECTION OF A THIRD SITE TO HOUSE ITS PERMANENT OFFICES AND FACILITIES FOR THE RECEPTION OF VISITORS. SEVERAL HAVE BEEN CONSIDERED AND THE CORPORATION HOPES THAT AT ITS NEXT MEETING, SCHEDULED FOR FEBRUARY 28-MARCH 2 IN HAWAII, A DEFINITE CHOICE WILL BE MADE ON A SITE NOT TOO FAR FROM THE SEA, WHERE THE WEATHER IS NOT TOO UNPLEASANT.

5. NORMAL PRODUCTION DELAYS HAVE HELD UP THE MANUFACTURE OF THE TELESCOPE, WHICH IS BEING PRODUCED IN FRANCE. THE POLISHING OF THE MIRRORS IS TO BE CARRIED OUT IN CANADA. THE CORPORATION'S PRESIDENT TOLD EMBOFF ON DEC. 19 THAT HE HOPED TO SEE THE TELESCOPE FUNCTIONING IN THE LATTER HALF OF 1979 OR AT THE LATEST, THE EARLY PART OF 1980.

6. THE TELESCOPE SITE IN HAWAII, FROM THE POINT OF LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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VIEW OF DELHAYE AND OTHER ASTRONOMERS, IS NEARLY IDEAL, BOTH BECAUSE OF THE WIDE RANGE OF THE SKY VISIBLE FROM THIS POINT, AS WELL AS ITS RELATIVELY ISOLATED LOCATION WHERE AUTOMOBILE FUMES AND OTHER MANMADE POLLUTION IS LESS LIKELY TO INTERFERE WITH THE CLARITY OF OBSERVATIONS. OTHER TELESCOPES WILL EVENTUALLY BE BUILT ON THE SAME MOUNTAIN, ONE BY THE UNITED KINGDOM INFRARED RADIO TELESCOPE (UKIRT), AND ANOTHER BY THE RADIO ASTRONOMY ORGANIZATION (RAO), ALL THREE GROUPS EXPECT TO SAVE A GOOD DEAL OF MONEY AND EFFORT BY SHARING INFRASTRUCTURE. AND ALL EXPECT TO MAKE THE AREA AN IMPORTANT ASTRONOMICAL CENTER IN THE NEAR FUTURE.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PROGRAMS (PROJECTS), OPTICAL EQUIPMENT
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 23-Dec-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1977PARIS37472
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D770480-0810
Format: TEL
From: PARIS
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1977/newtext/t19771222/aaaaarsh.tel
Line Count: 108
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 3fbecaafd-c188-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION OES
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 07-Mar-2005 12:00:00 am
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 139051
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: FRANCO-CANADIAN HAWAII TELESCOPE PROJECT
TAGS: TPHY, FR, CA, US
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/3fbecaafd-c188-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009